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FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 000382

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FOR UNDER SECRETARY BURNS FROM THE AMBASSADOR
STATE FOR EAP/MLS (BESTIC)
STATE FOR IO/RHS (OSTERMEIER, GHOSH, ROHN)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/09/2017
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [UNHRC](#) [LA](#)
SUBJECT: UNHCR MEMBER VOTE: LAO POSITION

REF: A. STATE 63346
[1](#)B. 06 VIENTIANE 1095

Classified By: AMBASSADOR PATRICA M. HASLACH FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)
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[1](#)1. (C) Ambassador presented text of non-paper on upcoming UNHRC membership voting, including USG support for Slovenia and Bosnia as preferred members vice Belarus, to Lao Vice Foreign Minister Phongsavath Boupha on May 10. The Vice Foreign Minister said the Ministry would consider the U.S. position.

[1](#)2. (C) COMMENT: The Lao Government is unlikely to move away from its traditional support for Belarus. In previous UN votes, the Ambassador has raised USG opposition to Belarus with MFA Director General for International Organizations Madame Kanika Phommachanh without positive result. Since Madame Kanika has been promoted to be the Lao Ambassador to the UN, we expect she will continue the traditional strong Lao reluctance to support criticism of other countries on human rights grounds -- either abstaining or voting against country-specific human rights violations (ref B) (because of its own vulnerability to outside criticism). So arguing against Belarus because of concerns about the repressive Lukashenko regime has little resonance here.
HASLACH